

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 080403
ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EPA-01 OES-07 INT-05 SP-02 L-03
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-----022475 291518Z /41

P 291443Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SENV, MX

SUBJECT: POLLUTION OF SAN PEDRO RIVER

1. ARIZONA AUTHORITIES HAVE RELEASED STATEMENT CAUTIONING AGAINST USE OF SAN PEDRO WATERS FOR MUNICIPAL OR RECREATIONAL PURPOSE. THIS STREAM ENTERS U.S. FROM MEXICO NORTH OF CANANEA NEAR PALOMINAS, ARIZONA, AND EMPTIES INTO GILA WEST OF PHOENIX. ACCORDING TO ARIZONA HEALTH SERVICE, COPPER SULPHATE CONTENT ON FEBRUARY 7 WAS SEVERAL TIMES THE TOXICITY LEVEL FOR FISH. IT HAS ALREADY RESULTED IN SERIOUS FISH KILLS IN THE UNITED STATES.

2. U.S. SECTION WAS DELAYED IN RAISING MATTER IN COMMISSION BECAUSE OF EXTENDED TIME TAKEN BY ARIZONA IN COMPLETING ANALYSIS, AND FALSE IMPRESSION THAT SITUATION HAD BEEN CORRECTED. COMMISSIONER FRIEDKIN ON MARCH 9 ASKED MEXICAN COMMISSIONER URGENTLY TO DETERMINE SOURCE AND TAKE ACTION
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TO STOP THE POLLUTION. MEXICAN COMMISSIONER TELEPHONED MARCH 10 TO REPORT THAT HE HAD ADVISED UNDER SECRETARY CRUICKSHANK OF SECRETARIAT OF AGRICULTURE AND HYDRAULIC RESOURCES, WHO HAD ASSURED HIM HE WOULD ISSUE ORDERS IMMEDIATELY TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM.

3. POLLUTION CONTINUES, HOWEVER, AND U.S. COMMISSIONER

HAS AGAIN ASKED MEXICAN COMMISSIONER FOR URGENT ATTENTION.

LATTER STATED MARCH 28 AGRICULTURE AND PUBLIC HEALTH
UNABLE TO ACT WHILE SEEKING LEGAL MEANS TO PERSUADE
NACIONAL FINANCIERA TO FORCE ACTION BY MINE OPERATORS,
WHO ARE EVIDENTLY INFLUENTIAL COMMUNITY GROUP. MEXICAN
COMMISSIONER, FOR REASONS NOT EVIDENT, MAY NOT HAVE ENGAGED
SUPPORT OF FOREIGN OFFICE.

4. EMBASSY SHOULD TAKE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE
PROBLEM ORALLY IN FOREIGN SECRETARIAT, EMPHASIZING HAZARDS
AND ILL EFFECTS IN UNITED STATES AND URGING IMMEDIATE
CORRECTION. LEVEL OF CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN WARRANTS
AMBASSADOR'S MENTIONING PROBLEM TO ROEL IF OCCASION ARISES.
PLEASE REPORT GOM RESPONSE. IF NO EVIDENCE OF MEXICAN
ATTENTION APPEARS REASONABLY SOON, WE WILL ALSO FOLLOW UP
WITH NOTE TO MEXICAN EMBASSY. COOPER

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Message Attributes

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